

Maurice Hinchey NEWS

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HINCHEY BLASTS BUSH FOR BACKTRACKING ON FOREST PROTECTION

WASHINGTON - U.S. Representative Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today criticized the decision of the Bush Administration to rescind the U.S. Forest Service's plan to protect 58.5 million acres of pristine national forest land. Hinchey was responding to the news that the administration will reopen the Roadless Area Conservation Policy established by the Clinton Administration.

"The Bush Administration is putting special interests ahead of the public interest," said Hinchey. "The Clinton Administration rightly set aside our last remaining roadless forests belonging to all Americans. Reopening this policy is clearly an attempt to roll back this landmark conservation achievement for the benefit of the timber, oil and mining industries."

Opponents of the Roadless Area Conservation Policy have claimed that it was a last minute rulemaking by the Clinton Administration and lacked sufficient public comment. Hinchey disputed that claim, pointing to the exhaustive process that led to the development of the policy.

"This plan is the result of the most extensive public participation process ever undertaken by the Department of Agriculture," said Hinchey. "At over 600 meetings in every national forest, an unprecedented number of Americans voiced their support for permanently protecting roadless areas."

Hinchey led the fight to prevent road construction and logging in the nearly 60 million acres of U.S. Forest Service land that is not already available for logging, mining, and other kinds of development. In June 1999 he generated a letter that was signed by 168 members of the House of Representatives urging the president to protect roadless areas within the National Forests. He subsequently fought for improvements to the administration's draft proposal that were eventually included in the final plan, including the immediate protection of the Tongass National Forest.

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